

# OPINION



# the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

**KARI BORGEN**  
Publisher

**DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
Editor

**JEREMY FELDMAN**  
Circulation Manager

**JOHN D. BRUIJN**  
Production Manager

**CARL EARL**  
Systems Manager

## OUR VIEW

# Saving a community resource

It was a joy last week to report the sale of the Performing Arts Center.

For more than a decade, Clatsop Community College leaders have been seeking to find a suitable buyer for the converted Peace Lutheran Church building on 16th Street.

The college bought it for classes and performances as it expanded in the 1970s, but discontinued a drama program many years ago and has moved away from hosting significant musical and other public events to focus on the core mission of providing community and academic education.

Maintenance issues as the building's interior deteriorated also meant it was no longer available for college classes, although it could still be used by community groups.

In recent years, a coalition called Partners for the PAC has helped partner organizations make good use of the facility for concerts, plays and guest speakers while seeking a long-term solution to ownership.

Many of the events were fundraisers for the PAC, paying for some repairs and enhancements. The Astoria Music Festival used the stage as an alternate venue for some of its smaller-scale concerts and operatic performances. The



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

After unfurling the banner in a big reveal, Charlene Larsen learns the new name for the venue — the Charlene Larsen Center for the Performing Arts.

North Coast Symphonic Band has graced its stage frequently and for the past two years the folk community has hosted a Pete Seeger birthday concert there.

As college leaders continued to seek a buyer, many in the arts community worried that the facility would be lost as a performing arts center. These fears were ramped up with an outside investor's approach to the college in 2016. When North Coast arts supporters learned the prospective buyers wanted to use the site for housing, they lobbied the college board to reject the offer. College leaders agreed, but urged

the Partners to find a workable solution.

As discussions continued, up stepped Constance Waisanen, a local financial adviser and arts supporter. Her organization, Trinity LLC, has bought the building with the sole intent of eventually handing it over to the partners.

"This is the win-win scenario we were hoping for," said Chris Breitmeyer, the college president. "The college can let go of a building it couldn't utilize and the community gets to keep the beloved gathering space."

While preserving the performing

arts center is good news, there was a bonus cause for celebration as the small, socially distanced crowd assembled last week discovered.

Warm applause greeted the unveiling of the new name of the facility — the Charlene Larsen Center for the Performing Arts.

Larsen has been a fixture in the leadership of the Partners, a stalwart performer with more than one musical group, and a leader with the Astoria Regatta, Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival and Lions Club. When she was chosen for the George Award in 2011, the citizen-of-the-year honor was long overdue.

Her work for the PAC has included leading the Partners, but also considerable hands-on maintenance and refurbishing of the building — even the mucky stuff.

The one cloud on the horizon is the one affecting all arts organizations. The necessary health and safety requirements of the coronavirus mean that performing arts facilities may be among the last to reopen when health risks of public gatherings begin to diminish.

Still, the Partners for the PAC board and supporters combine the energy and enthusiasm of some of the most creative minds on the North Coast. We have confidence they will continue this united drive to keep the facility alive.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Inspiring

Marches, civil unrest, a pandemic ... not just today's news, but almost a century ago these same events ushered in the 19th Amendment.

There were meetings, marches, rallies and rage taking place for 72 years. Oregon can thank Abigail Scott Duniway for mobilizing Oregonians to pass suffrage earlier in 1912, eight years ahead of the 19th Amendment.

I just previewed "The Vote," airing on PBS' "American Experience." It is history coming alive with stunning original historical film footage, a compelling true story and one we should all know.

Beginning Jan. 3, 1917, women silently picketed the White House six days a week, in the cold of winter, enduring jeering, jail and hunger strikes for months. The sheer dedication of many thousands of women to gain the right to vote is astounding. Did you know the 19th Amendment passed Aug. 26, 1920? Finally the other half of American citizens could vote.

"The Vote," an inspiring PBS program, is one you will want to share with your family and friends; it will open up conversations relevant to today's issues. Hopefully it will encourage everyone to register to vote and vote, your vote is your voice for our environment, our health care, our education and the security of a better life for our future.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment in August, I urge you to tune in for this remarkable story, one not taught when I was in school. It is not "his-story" but our story.

LaREE JOHNSON  
Astoria

### Very low interaction

I wish to respond to the letter to the editor, "Dangerous Cycle" (The Astorian, June 30). I am a senior citizen in my late 70s, who has had very low interaction with police personnel all of my life.

It has been my personal experience that any time an officer of the law wanted to interact with me, I made every effort to be cooperative with the officer, and answer any question in a nonhostile manner if an officer wished to talk to me, or instruct me to move off in a different direction if they were dealing with an issue.

My observation of most of the protests I have seen this year is that there is the appearance of substantial belligerence between protesters and police trying to maintain order during many of these protests. I suspect that there are police that are overly aggressive when they sense that a large group of protesters is actively bait-

ing these police, and I deplore their lack of self-control.

However, I see very little effort by many protesters to be cooperative with police, or to make an effort to avoid confrontation. I see confrontation as a goal by an unusually large number of protesters in many of the protests I see on TV, and it breaks my heart that being a citizen these days seems to make these protesters believe they can get away with almost anything because they are in a large uncontrolled group that enjoys baiting the police.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE  
Warrenton

### A question

President Donald Trump famously claimed he could shoot someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue, and he wouldn't lose any voters. His lawyer even used the same argument in federal appeals court last fall, while declaring that a sitting president has absolute immunity from criminal indictment or investigation.

Here's a question: Would Donald Trump lose any voters if he allowed Russian President Vladimir Putin to shoot someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue? How about American soldiers in Afghanistan?

This November, will you be voting for Trump, or for America?

ERIC HALPERIN  
Gearhart

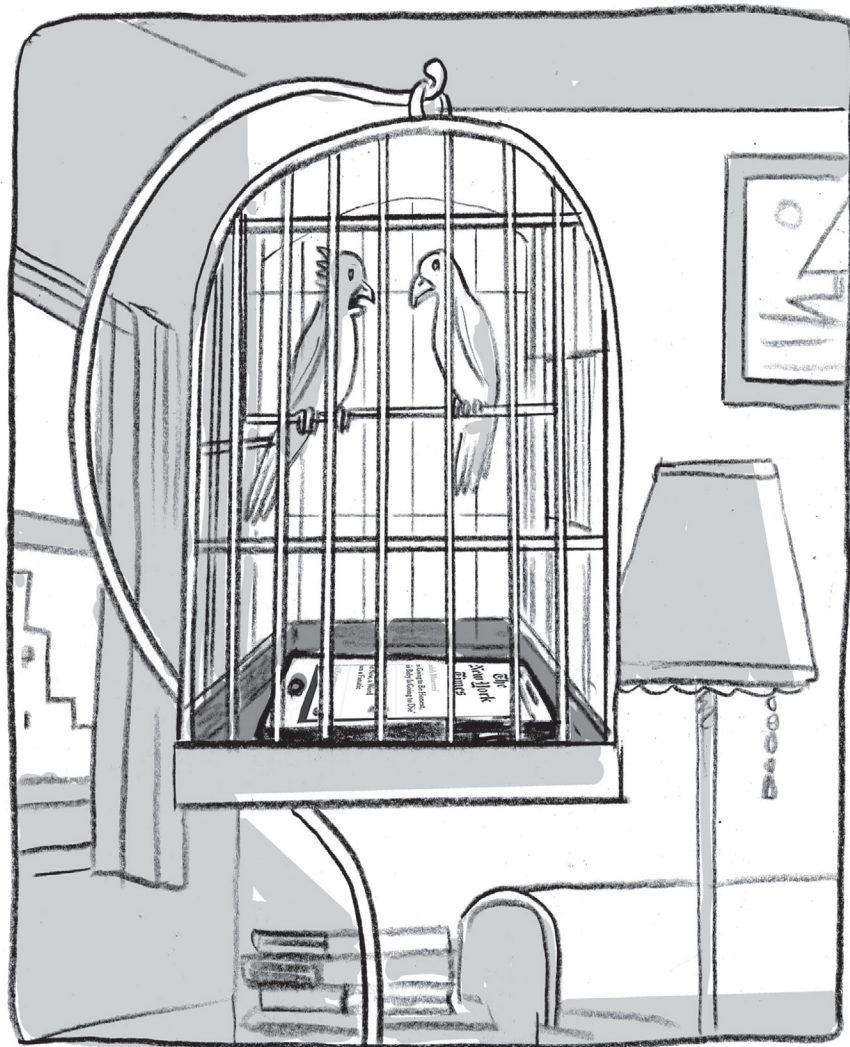
### Bleed red

I feel sad and incensed when I see or hear hateful diatribe against others, and worse, systemic racism.

First, we must confront the violence and terrible inequities against Black people for the past 400 years, beginning with slavery. What happened to 40 acres and a mule? Never happened.

Also, Black people must receive reparations for continuing inequity in opportunities, medical care, justice, community assistance and broken promises by the white-dominated majority. By 2050, Caucasians are on the way to becoming a minority, unless climate change, disease, stupid warfare, ignorant fascists and hate-filled mongers don't cause extinction of all humans.

First, though, let's focus on providing real help to our most vulnerable population — Black Americans. No more institutionalized slavery in our prison systems. No more violence and death caused by police officers; or disgusting actions and words at the hands of ignorant, unhappy, hate-filled



"They stopped the paper."

KUPER

groups that somehow have these violent fascist and racist agendas.

I live in Clatsop County, and near my home an unhappy person flies a Confederate flag. It shatters the beauty of this area to see that flag, and I wonder what kind of sick, afraid and dangerous people live at that home.

Isn't it inconceivable that many people don't think all humans bleed red?

SUSAN WILLIAMS  
Astoria

### Inspirational leadership

Kudos to Clatsop County Commissioner Pam Wev for her inspirational leadership and willingness to call a spade a spade at the June 24 commission meeting.

Her insistence on keeping Robert Stricklin and Chris Farrar on the Clatsop County Planning Commission was the right call. Both men have been thoughtful and fair minded in their positions, which have consistently upheld local values.

The commissioners voting in the minority tried the old "Moscow" Mitch McConnell tactic of not allowing an important vote, even though the change of

majority rule on the commission is months away. In deference to the new composition of the commission after Jan. 1, the minority tried to postpone the vote, which Commissioner Wev courageously called a "cheap trick."

Commissioner Mark Kujala and Commissioner Lianne Thompson said they were just trying to avoid the wholesale replacement of the new Planning Commission that took place in 2011, after a progressive majority took control of the county commission.

Time will tell if Kujala and Thompson are willing to live up to that standard, and let the rightful democratic appointment of Stricklin and Farrar stand. More likely, they will conveniently forget about it, and lead the charge to replace the full planning commission after January.

When Courtney Bangs and John Toyooka join the county commission, it will usher in preferential treatment for big business and corporations, under the guise of giving voice to rural communities, rather than the environmentally sensitive, slow growth values upheld by Stricklin and Farrar.

ROGER DORBAND  
Astoria